

WAR AND THE NEED
OF A
HIGHER NATIONALISM.

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AMONG the books which influenced me in my boyhood there is none which I remember more vividly than Creasy's "Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World." I gather from various sources that this popular work is somewhat under a cloud in these days but I shall ever retain my affection for the book that first taught me to regard history as an interesting study. Wars occupy a less important place in the opinion of historians than of old. The history of the peoples' struggles with life, the development of their legislation, of their literature, of all that we mean by their civilization, these are the really important matters. Yet wars have marked great turning points in the development of the nations, and there is no opinion about the present stupendous conflict that seems more general than that such a turning point is indicated in the events of to-day.

I.

For the purposes of this article the outstanding feature of the war is the fact that whilst many nations are engaged in it they are, with the exception of Japan, all Christian, and Christians of every kind: Roman

Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant. Can we wonder if Positivists, Materialists, Agnostics, Sceptics of every kind, to say nothing of Mohammedans, Brahmans and others, should point to the war as the final proof of the failure of Christianity? To say that it is not Christianity that has failed but the lack of it will I fear help but little. (Must there not, it will be retorted, be something radically wrong with a religion that after nineteen centuries of practice issues thus?)

The conclusion is not inevitable. Christianity has still glorious triumphs to its credit, obscured though these may be to the extent of eclipse. But eclipses pass, and the glories of Christianity in the production of character, in the fostering of humane sentiment, in care for the sick and suffering, in missionary zeal, in all those things of which Mr. Loring Brace wrote some thirty years ago in "Gesta Christi," stand secure. (But it ought to be frankly and even emphatically urged by Christ's people themselves: (1) That organised Christianity has broken down and must be reconstructed, and (2) that Christianity has failed in the field of international relations.)

I propose in this article to deal only with the second of these positions. How little influence Christianity has had in this matter of international relations the present war sufficiently proves. What we are concerned to show is that (the nations have never more than remotely or obscurely discerned the Christian relation.) They are still largely governed by old pagan ideas. Our first task then must be to retrace the path of Christian theory and practice with reference to international relations to a period prior to the emergence of any, even the faintest, conception of the human race as a unity, as Humanity or Mankind.

The best information we can get on this subject is to be gained from the Old Testament. The religion of the Semitic peoples of the Holy Land and surrounding countries is known as Henotheism. Each people, or rather we should perhaps say each land, had its own indigenous god : Jehovah, Asshur, Moloch, Chemosh, and so on. Each god was interested only in the dwellers of its own land. Each nation believed in the *existence* of all the other gods, but it naturally believed *in* its own. Take such a passage as II. Kings xviii. 34, where the Rabshakeh taunts the citizens of Jersualem : “ Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad ? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, of Hena and Ivvah ? . . . Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand ? ” The Rabshakeh does not question the existence of the gods of Hamath and the rest, nor of Jehovah. His point is that Asshur the god of Assyria is stronger than any of them. Nor is there any reason to doubt that the Hebrews up to about the time of Amos, and the rank and file long afterwards, shared in this view of the matter. The extraordinary strength of this idea of the god as indigenous to the land is illustrated in the story of Namaan the Syrian, who, cured of his leprosy by the power of Jehovah’s prophet, declares that henceforth even in Syria Jehovah shall be his god. But how can he worship Jehovah in Syria ? There is one way. He must take home with him some of the soil of Jehovah’s land to Syria, and then upon a little altar made of it he can offer a sacrifice to Jehovah. This explains Namaan’s strange request, “ Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules’ burden of earth ? For thy servant will henceforth offer neither

burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto Jehovah" (II. Kings v.). Does not the same thought underlie the words of the Psalm cxxxvii. 4: "How shall we sing Jehovah's song in a strange land?"

The separateness of the gods, and their owning of separate territories, with the hostilities and rivalries involved in such a condition of things, is the reflection of men's thoughts about their own relations as members of different nations. The nations are clearly thought of as quite distinct entities, with no ties of natural kinship. From motives of advantage they might sometimes enter into alliances, but their natural condition was that of hostility. No obligations to live peaceably together were laid upon them. What we mean by humaneness was unknown to them for they knew not what we mean by humanity. Yet after all they *were* akin though they knew it not, and so doubtless individual acts of humanity were frequent. The story of Ruth leaving her own people is an example. But kindness rested upon no theory or conviction either theological or humanitarian. Hence the extraordinary duplicity and ferocity of Jael towards Sisera is highly extolled by Deborah (Judges v. 24): "Blessed of all women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be."

It was Monotheism, the doctrine of one God of all the world, that was the necessary presupposition of the idea of Humanity, and it was Monotheism that introduced a new conception of international relations. It is the glory of the prophets of Israel to have introduced Monotheism to the world. Amos strikes a new note when he introduces Jehovah as the Lord of all the nations. It is a further and equal glory of the prophet that his religion was ethical. Not only one God but a righteous God. Damascus, Gaza, Edom, Ammon, Moab,

are one after another condemned because of their cruel injustices. But that which exalts this prophetic word still higher above the ordinary religious notions of the times is the equal if not greater condemnation meted out to the prophet's own people. A God of all the world, who judges all the nations in righteousness, this is the lofty message of the Hebrew prophets to mankind.

The promise and potency of ethical Monotheism find glorious expression in a passage quoted (perhaps from some other prophet) by both Isaiah and Micah. The prophet in a kind of vision sees the nations coming up to Jerusalem to learn about the one God and His laws. Now what is the result of this assembling of the nations to learn the ways of Jehovah? Here is the familiar answer: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." The conclusion is perfectly logical. When the nations, who hitherto have warred in the name of their national gods, have learned that there is one God, and only one, a God of righteousness, how can wars continue? Alas! two thousand six hundred years later war on the most frightful scale is waged between nations all of whom (except Japan) acknowledge the same God. Is it not clear that there is something very wrong with our conception of the bearing of our religion upon our national relations?

This doctrine and vision of the prophets is taken up by our Lord, who finds types of superior faith in a hated Roman, of superior religion in a declassed publican, of superior love in a heretic Samaritan, and who sets forth the final test of life in the parable of the sheep and the goats in terms of love. It finds its first approximately systematic statement in the letters of St. Paul, wherein

it reaches its climax in what I may perhaps call the classical or typical Catholic utterance, "in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free."

How shall we express the Christian conception of the relationship of nation to nation as it arises out of the Gospel?

It may be said that the logical issue of Christianity is a cosmopolitanism in which national distinctions disappear altogether. A kind of cosmopolitanism does spring out of Christianity: the cosmopolitanism of the Catholic Church. But the dissolution of national distinctions, and the merging of the nations into one humanity does not seem to me to be necessary to the realisation of the Christian ideal. There is something even higher than this, viz., the conception of the nations as members of a family of nations, each of which brings its contribution to the commonweal. No one would contend that the doctrine of the brotherhood of all men involved the destruction of the family. No more is it necessary that the same doctrine should do away with the nation. What the brothers and sisters of a family should be to each other that the various nations should be to each other. It has often, in reference to Church Unity, been pointed out that variety in unity rather than uniformity is Nature's lesson. Just so, the destruction of national types, even if possible, would not enrich but impoverish the wealth of human life. Nations have their own gifts, their own advantages, their own opportunities. They have also their own defects, their own disadvantages, their own limitations. Here is the opportunity of national brotherhood—each nation contributing its share to the mighty whole of a happy and harmonious humanity. That nature does not tend to

the obliteration of national types would seem to be shown by the fact that even in these days of common ideals of culture and education and of easy and rapid communication we see new types coming into existence. A typical American is a very different kind of person from a typical Englishman, and we are seeing even on this side of the Atlantic a typical Canadian coming into existence, who is quite a different person from the typical American.

Now it does not appear that the nations of the world calling themselves Christian, with, in most cases, State Churches indicating some national acceptance of Christianity, have ever regarded their relationship from the Christian point of view. We must not stop to ask why. It may be partly because Christianity has been regarded from a too individual point of view. Yet this is not true of all parts of Christendom. It may be because Christianity has too often been presented as something having mainly to do with some other world than this. It may be because it has been steeped in a kind of soft sentimentalism, devoid of practical strength and value. But however it may be, the melancholy fact is obvious. (In their international relations the nations are almost purely pagan.) They still regard each other as naturally hostile. The bad tradition that we have already described—without its excuse—of the fundamental hostility of nations still persists. The very term which describes the great end and aim of international politics in Europe—"the balance of power"—is a sufficient proof of this. To produce a condition of things in which the nations, though armed to the teeth, *dare* not go to war has been the avowed object of statesmen. There has been no faith, no vision, no idealism, nothing but the crassest pagan materialism. Perhaps it is a good thing it has

broken down. We have seen displayed splendid talents. Perhaps no age of the world has ever seen greater statesmen, and this is the end of it all. Truly the wisdom of the world is folly with God.

II.

What lesson to the Church springs out of the consideration of these general principles of Christianity, and of their failure in application? Must we not in candour admit that upon the Churches rather than the statesmen rests the larger share of the responsibility? Has the Christian doctrine of international relations ever been forcibly and persistently set forth by Catholic or Protestant? Has not the Papacy in the past been involved in non-Christian diplomacies? (Have not Protestant State Churches set what they deemed Patriotism above Christianity? We have watched these pagan diplomacies, and we cannot recall a voice of protest from organised Christianity, and certainly no clear teaching on the matter has been given. To me it seems clear that after the war the most hopeful and healthful thing for all the Churches would be to unite in a hearty general confession that "we have erred and strayed from God's ways; we have left undone those things that we ought to have done, and we have done those things that we ought not to have done, and there is (in this matter of International or Catholic Christianity) no health in us.") Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, all in the same galley. The Churches greatly emphasise the importance of confession to God on the part of the individual, whether directly or through the medium of a priest. Can the Churches as social communities make their confession, or shall we go on in the same muddling

way until the groaning chariot of material progress once more breaks down ?

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The Church glories in the title of Catholic. But have we not lost something of the basic, primary, essential significance of that word ? Or rather shall we not say that the *primary* signification has been thrust into the background and certain *secondary* significations which may or may not be true have been pushed into their place ? It is too often forgotten that there are not only the errors of fact, but the errors that spring from the dislocation of the true order or importance of facts. The word Catholic with the Greek means Orthodox, or the acceptance of an entire and in some respects a highly complicated system of doctrine. To the Roman it means primarily obedience to the See of Peter. The word is used also in reference to the organisation of the Church, and of its worship. So we read of Catholic order and Catholic ritual. The question to be asked is, is any of these significations primary ? Are they not all secondary ?

“The Church is Catholic because in its essence it transcends all national and local particularities. It is the Church of Humanity.” The other essential feature of Catholicity is the “proclamation of one transcendent God,” who is revealed, so far as our present life is concerned, in Jesus Christ. And the Christian revelation “is not contained in a scheme of words clear cut and precise. It is in Jesus Christ Himself,” and in certain “fruitful ideas, with a power of development.”

Shall we be too broad then if we say that Catholicity is primarily the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, revealed in Jesus Christ ? And shall we be too

bold if we add that just as soon as you exalt anything that diminishes the inclusiveness of this circle into a condition of Catholicity, you are, at least, in danger of becoming uncatholic, i.e., sectarian? I am aware that I am here on highly disputable ground, and I have tried to express myself with moderation. Personally I feel that no one who can say sincerely that he believes in one God the Father, and in the brotherhood of man, and that the meaning and nature of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man are revealed in Jesus Christ, should be excluded from communion in the Catholic Church. If we really believe in the guidance of the Spirit, we may feel sure that the evils that may spring from such a wide inclusiveness are less than those which have as a matter of fact sprung from the exclusion of those who love God and man in the very spirit of Jesus.

What now is the bearing of all this on Nationalism? Catholicity in the broad sense in which we have now described it conditions Nationalism, not Nationalism Catholicity. Catholicity conditions Patriotism, not Patriotism Catholicity. The human race and nothing less is the Family of God. The nations then are members of the Family of God, and their attitude towards each other is the simplest of problems theoretically, however difficult it may be to carry out in practice. But it may be confidently asserted that this view of the relationship of nations to each other has never been theoretically held by statesmen. Unselfishness as between nation and nation, self-sacrifice as between nation and nation, are things unknown. To what extent do the nations, of the world consider the bearing of their commercial treaties upon the prosperity of other nations? Unlimited competition, national suspicion, supported by

vast armaments, these are the axiomatic principles of international politics.

Out of the present distress then there leaps to the front of all constructive effort, the need of a Higher Nationalism. The nationalism of to-day still rests upon the pagan principles described in the beginning of this article. The supreme effort of Christianity in the years that lie before us is to root up this poisonous plant from a far distant past that brings forth wild grapes by which the children's teeth are set on edge, and plant the Lord's vine in the Lord's vineyard. Just as in Isaiah's day so in ours, instead of righteousness there goes up to heaven a lamentable cry.

The Higher Nationalism is a very different thing from Cosmopolitanism, nor will it make any lesser demand upon the virtue of Patriotism. Only the Higher Nationalism will demand a nobler Patriotism. If we think of each nation as a member of the great Federation of the Race, if we think of that nation as a brother in the Family of God, if we think of it as possessing its own peculiar advantages of wealth and opportunity, of intellect and temperament, all of which may be contributed to the general stock of well being—the only true wealth—then we can see that the more national we are, and the more truly patriotic we are, the more we contribute to the general good. Here is the ideal as it found expression in the words of an eminent Englishman of letters: "Let us conceive of the whole group of civilised nations as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working towards a common result, a confederation whose members have a due knowledge both of the past, out of which they all proceed, and of each other. This, too, was the ideal of Goethe, and it is

an ideal which will impose itself upon the thoughts of our modern societies more and more."

Here, as it seems to me, is the most urgent task for all lovers of unity. It must take time and a long time. The habit of mind needed for the production of the Higher Nationalism cannot be planted and become a flourishing growth in a day. It needs first to be ardently preached. But mere preaching is not enough. The organised Church is the medium for the realisation of this new international ideal. And since for its production no present organised Church or the whole aggregate of Church organisations suffices, we must earnestly, patiently, and above all candidly, expose the causes of the failure of organised Christianity, and lay broader foundations upon which we can all take our stand, and build up by united effort a city that shall indeed be four-square, whose length and breadth and height shall reveal a perfect symmetry, in whose light the nations of them which are saved shall walk, and into which the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour.



